

RPG Reload File 004 – 'The Quest Gold'

[September 4, 2014](#) by [Shaun Musgrave](#)



Hello, gentle readers, and welcome once again to the **RPG Reload**, our weekly quest to revisit some golden RPG classics of the App Store. Each week, I take a look at a different previously-released RPG to see how it holds up these days, or just to do a little deeper dig than we normally have a chance to do in our reviews. I try to cover a variety of RPGs from various times and places, but just to keep me from going mad with power, once a month I turn the task of choosing the game over to you, the readers. In fact, what you are reading on your screen right now is the very first **Reader's Choice RPG Reload**, and your deadly mob justice has proven to have some spectacular taste. Nevertheless, that means it's time for you to do your thing again and cast a vote for the topic of **RPG Reload 008** in the comments below or in the [Official RPG Reload Club thread](#) in our forums. Feel free to also chime in with your thoughts, anecdotes, and fresh humor.

This week, by your request, we're going to be taking a look at a true mobile classic, *The Quest Gold* ([\\$7.99](#)). Plumbing the past isn't a new thing for the **RPG Reload**, but when it comes to mobile gaming, it's hard to find a more vintage example than this. Making its debut on Pocket PCs somewhere around late 2006, *The Quest* ([\\$4.99](#)) was created by the Hungarian developer Redshift, a team of just two people who had been developing fantasy RPG games for mobile devices as far back as 2001. Of course, the gaming scene on mobiles wasn't quite as lively back then as it is today, but from what I can gather, the game enjoyed quite a bit of acclaim within Pocket

PC circles. The more relevant story for iOS gamers is when *The Quest* was ported to iPhone in March of 2009. Given its age and relative lack of fame compared to games like *Final Fantasy* [\(\\$7.99\)](#), *The Quest* had to earn every fan it got, but that's something it seems to have no trouble doing.

I'm not going to be delving into the game's many expansions in this particular article, as there are literally not enough hours in a week to even cover half of them, but I do want to mention the praiseworthy fact that even this far down the road from its release, *The Quest* still sees fairly regular expansion packs released courtesy of developer Zarista Games. The newest one, *Elemental Asteroids* [\(\\$2.99\)](#), released early this year, and there are still more on the way. Each of these expansions is easily a full-length RPG on its own, and there are 16 of them available on iOS. A person could pretty much fill their gaming urges just by playing *The Quest* and its various expansions, if they wanted to.

The version I played for this article, *The Quest Gold*, includes the main game and the first three expansions, *Islands of Ice & Fire* [\(\\$2.99\)](#), *Hero of Lukomorye I* [\(\\$1.99\)](#), and *Hero of Lukomorye II* [\(\\$1.99\)](#). At only a few dollars more than the game on its own, this is definitely the way to go if you're looking to give *The Quest* a shot. It offers up around 200 hours of gameplay, and if you're still hungry for more after that, well, it's out there. There's no iPad-native version, but it is optimized for retina displays and the larger screens of the iPhone 5 and up. All told, for such an old app, it's in really good shape in 2014. My hat's off to the developers for maintaining it so well over the years.

Alright, enough talking around *The Quest*, let's talk about the game itself. If you haven't played it, maybe it's because you've seen the screenshots and though it looked antiquated, or maybe you were scared off by all of the expansion packs, but let me assure you that this game still holds up just as well as ever, and remains one of the best RPG experiences on a mobile device. It feels sprawling and epic, yet perfectly suited for the pick up and

play nature of mobiles. You start off by making your character, with quite a few details to choose, then are dumped in or near the first town with your mission in hand. The governor of this land has disappeared, and you've been sent by the king to find out what has happened. That's your first quest, but there will be many more to come before you get a chance to see it through.

The Quest is more than a little imposing when you first start. It's hard to know where to begin, and it's easy to get yourself into trouble if you wander in the wrong direction. I know the first-person view is a little scary for some, as well, because it's harder to find your way around compared to a bird's eye or even simple behind-the-back view. At its core, though, *The Quest* couldn't be more simple. It's all there in the title. You need to seek out quests by talking to people, and solve them. Fill your little book with things to do, then start crossing them off one by one. If you can't seem to survive against the monsters you face while trying to complete a quest, or you can't persuade the person you need to, go do something else for a while. It's okay. There are plenty of other quests to take care of. When the quests start to dry up, you know it's time to move on to the next town. If you're enterprising, however, you can always head to the next town early. Nothing is stopping you except some potentially deadly encounters.

This quest-based structure is both engaging and satisfying. If you have a lot of time, you can hunker down on take on a bunch of quests, or work on a more complex one. If you've only got a little time, you can handle a shorter quest or simply make preparations for something bigger. Even heading outside of the town and finding a monster to kill will be beneficial in some way. You can save anywhere, you can plop down a tent and heal almost anywhere, and with multiple save slots available, you can make tons of saves without worrying that you're painting yourself into a corner that you'll forget how to get out of by the next time you play. All of this adds up to something that is easy to take out and play anytime, and for this last week, that's pretty much what I did.

The Quest could have hung its hat on these basic mechanics, called it a day, and still come away as a pretty fun game, but what makes the game feel truly special is all the work that went into making the world feel alive. Heroes are often judged by their appearance, so you'd best make sure your gear isn't just practical, but also fabulous. Various plants and flowers grow all over the place, waiting to be plucked and ground in a pestle to create various potions and concoctions. The innkeeper is all too happy to play a game of cards with you if you want to do a little gambling. Sometimes your cunning plan to recover health by camping out can be spoiled by a rainstorm. Day slips into night, when shops are closed, citizens are off the streets, and dark windows at the rear of buildings can be smashed by the less scrupulous for the prizes contained within. Perhaps you want to partake of some of the many ladies of the night who populate the cities? You can, but you'll likely catch a disease, so be careful. Oh, and if you run afoul of the law, you'd best be ready to pay the fine or spend some real time in jail, tarnishing both your reputation and your stats in one fell swoop.

The game gives you a great deal of agency in how it unfolds, and you'll often come across quests that are at odds with each other. You'll have to throw in with one party or the other, and there's no going back once you've made a choice. I mean, unless you kept an extra save file. There's often more profit in doing the wrong thing, and doing the right thing can sometimes hurt your reputation if it appears to be the wrong thing to the general populace. Certain choices can block off your access to other quests, too, so you might want to think very carefully about bedding that Amazon Queen you were sent to kill, for example. Your choices can even influence what equipment you can make use of, with certain artifacts meant only for the pure or stained of heart.

Speaking of equipment, that's another thing *The Quest* excels at. There is an absolutely staggering amount of items in this game, including various types of weapons, armor, magic wands, scrolls, potions, food, books, jewels, ingredients, and more. This great spread of treasure makes for great

motivation to kill monsters or explore dungeons. There's a lot of cool stuff to be found if you poke around in the right places, items that will give you a serious leg up on some of the more challenging fights in the game. On the other hand, if you can't find a cool magical item, you can always make one yourself by paying an enchanter to give a piece of gear the boost of your choice. Just make sure you don't slack on keeping it all in shape, because worn out gear isn't much use to anyone. You can either pay a blacksmith to restore it, or learn the skill to do it yourself.

Another thing I enjoy is how tense the battles can be in this game. The monsters sometimes have a very stiff advantage over you, and you need to plan accordingly if you expect to survive. Mages are squishy, to be sure, but only if you get close enough to squish them, and magic hurts really badly from very far away. Make sure you quaff an magic resistance potion in advance. If you plan on going toe-to-toe with a cyclops, you're going to find out why they've stuck around so long in myths, so pack plenty of health pick-me-ups. You might think your armor is tough enough to survive a confrontation with an undead skeleton champion, but you should probably give yourself a casting of stonewall, just in case. Know your escape route, try not to get cornered or ganged up on, and in short, be smart if you want to live. The enemies aren't all that bright, but what they lack in brains, they tend to make up for in numbers and sheer relentlessness.

If that's all not enough, we've even got dungeons, beautiful dungeons, full of monsters and puzzles, all with a nice automap feature so you can leave your graph paper at home. So many RPGs these days skimp on the dungeon designs, and it leaves a hole in my heart, friends. At least in the base game, *The Quest's* dungeons rarely go too big, but they're still enjoyable tests of your abilities to survive in dangerous conditions and piece together clues. There's a certain feeling of claustrophobic dread that creeps in when you set foot in a dungeon in this game, even if it turns out to not be a particularly dangerous one. Finishing any of these is almost always worth your while in terms of treasure, on top of simply being a good time.

I could probably keep going on here, but let's keep this to a reasonable couple thousand words or so instead. *The Quest* is basically a massive RPG adventure sandbox, with a seemingly inexhaustible supply of things to do. It lets you make your own way through the game, and provides enough things to play around with that you really will feel like your game is your own. On top of that, it's been well-supported, and there's an unreal amount of extra content to pick up even if you do manage to finish up *Gold*. The engine's a bit old and the graphics aren't the type to win you over in stills, and maybe not even in motion, but the actual nuts and bolts of the game are still well beyond what almost any other RPG on the App Store offers. Once I got into the rhythm, I truly could not stop finding excuses to play it this past week, and when I wasn't playing it, I was often thinking about playing it. In my opinion, *The Quest Gold* is a very strongly recommended RPG reload.

What do you think about it? This was the overwhelming winner of the first reader vote, so I know there's a lot of love here for the game. Please share that love in the comments below, or in the [Official RPG Reload Club thread](#). Also, don't forget to start voting for the game you'd like to see in the next reader's choice feature, **RPG Reload File 008**. No voting for *The Quest* again! We might revisit the game for some of its expansions down the road, but for now, let's allow some other games to get their time in the sun. As for me, I'll be back next week with another great RPG from the App Store archives. Thanks for reading!

Next Week's Reload Hint: *September is here, time to go back to school!*